

Livin' the dream

Back in April, I was daydreaming about the summer and the projects my husband, Don, and I would do in our yard this year. While the snowflakes settled, my spirits were lifted knowing warm weather was on its way. This resulted in my April 16 column, "Backyard Dreamin'." It's only fair that I should give you an update on those projects, because accountability is a good thing, right?



Random Reflections
by Diane Leukam

Our 4- by 8-foot raised bed garden was a little more controlled this year than last. We planted fewer varieties of vegetables and left the vines for someone else to grow. It was a good decision. The salad greens are finished and what remains are carrots, beets and a few onions. The salad greens were delicious for a while, but we couldn't keep up with them. The location of the garden is not ideal either, so we will chalk it up as something we tried, and the garden will find its new home and provide for another household next year. I give the overall project about a C-.

It might seem odd that we are only keeping this little garden for two seasons, but it has quickly become obvious that until we are both retired and have a more consistent schedule, we are going to be much better off frequenting the farmers' market at the Legion parking lot on Saturday mornings.

There was one lasting good that came of the salad greens this year, and it actually stemmed from acting on a suggestion from a somewhat sassy guide while on a bus tour through Italy last September. She said we should quit buying all those salad dressings when we got home and instead use olive oil, salt and pepper. She was biased, of course, but personally, I love it.

Remember the butterfly garden I told you Don and I were going to plant this year? The flowers are filling out, they are colorful and there is really no doubt what

it looks like. Here's the kicker, though: Just because you shape a garden like a butterfly, it doesn't mean they will come. Oh, we see a few butterflies now and then, but our choice of plants might need some adjustments for next year. It's a work in progress, but we have a great beginning. I give it a B.

We talked about lining the natural ditch at the back of the yard with landscape fabric and the extra field stones in the neighborhood. We ran out of stones but will finish it next summer. With the sturdy little bridge and the flowers all around, I give the finished portion of the project an A, with good grades anticipated for the overall project.

In the front yard, there is a space where grass doesn't grow under some oak trees. Last fall's repeat seeding has not turned out. Even with the most diligent of efforts, the grass is still sketchy at best. It is an A for effort; I will not give the grass a grade.

We talked about building a staircase into the landscape to gracefully maneuver the slope from the front of our house and down around the side. It was not a definite on our list for this year, but the image in my mind gets an A+.

When it comes to potted plants, I have never succeeded at them; Don has officially fired me and I get an F. Seriously, I might hire my daughter, Melissa, to do a couple of pots for us next year because hers are always gorgeous. She and her daughter, Gemma, 9, were sitting on our front porch last week and I was mentioning how my begonias look awful, which was actually an overstatement. Gemma smiled and said so very sweetly, "We have begonias and they look just fine!"

Oh well, the hostas look great. That should count for something!

Fall planning continues

To say that educators are considered planners is really quite an understatement. It is so true that, as educators, we have an overwhelming need to be prepared, planned and ready for as many possible scenarios as humanly possible; as a former second grade teacher, I learned this early on in my teaching career. I believe I speak for all educators in that the "unknown" aspect of the coronavirus has caused some real challenges while planning for the 2020-21 school year.



Sauk Centre Public Schools superintendent
by Pat Westby

If you recall, a 26-member team spent the month of July working on three basic plans that included a model where all students return to school; a hybrid model where 50% of students return to school and the rest distance learn; and a distance learning model where no students return to school. Then on July 30, the Safe Learning Plan for 2020-21 School Year was released.

With the Safe Learning Plan for 2020-21 School Year, we learned that the model each school district would be implementing would be based on local data. This data is based on a 14-day COVID-19 case rate by county, which is outlined below. This outline includes the Learning Model parameters for each tier, or what I am referring to as "bands," along with the corresponding learning plan that will be implemented based on the number of county cases per 10,000 people over a 14-day period:

- Band 1: 0-9 cases, in-person for all students.
- Band 2: 10-19 cases, in-person for elementary students, hybrid model for secondary students.
- Band 3: 20-29 cases, hybrid for all students.
- Band 4: 30-49 cases, hybrid for elementary students, distance learning for secondary students.
- Band 5: 50+ cases, distance learning for all students.

What this criteria shows us is that, if the Stearns County 14-day case rate falls below nine, all our students would be able to attend school in-person. In contrast, if our Stearns County 14-day case rate rises to 50 or more, our schools would be closed like they were last spring and we would be using a distance learning model.

There is a chart in this week's Herald outlining Sauk Centre Public School's plans for each of the five bands; you can see that, as the case rate in Stearns County declines or gets lower, our students are able to attend school on a more consistent basis. As the case rate rises, our students attend school in-person less and less. I know you have heard me say many times, "It takes a village to raise a child." I believe this applies more now than ever before. As a community, we can all do our part by washing our hands, staying home when not feeling well, wearing our masks in public, social distancing and covering our coughs and sneezes, all in an effort to try and keep our numbers low with the goal of having our students back in school as much as possible.

Thank you for your continued support of our students, our schools and our community. Please continue to take care of yourselves and stay healthy and together so we will have a rewarding and successful 2020-21 school year.

Stupid advice

The following is a letter to my son who could very well be born by the time this paper is published. If he has any grasp of language right now, though, he's smart enough to hide it, and while I plan to stick around for an annoyingly protracted period of time, there's never a guarantee my career, sanity or earthly life will last long enough for him to reach the linguistic aptitude needed to make faint sense of my words. Therefore, I'm enlisting you all as my backup; if I'm incapacitated, you readers will have to arrange a mass simultaneous recitation of this letter for my son, thereby fulfilling my fatherly duties of causing him endless social embarrassment. Thank you.



Ultra Sonnek
by Ben Sonnek

lie around all day like a sack of wet noodles while screaming when you want food, and if that isn't a genius illusion, I don't know what is; I mean, you spent the last five or so months of your uterine gestation inflicting copious amounts of blunt-force trauma to your mother's insides, so I know you have enough energy to get off your butt and at least vacuum the carpet or something. Too bad that, by the time you're able to read this, sentience will have taken away much of that genius, and you'll be stupid like the rest of us.

You were born into a pretty rough year to begin with, and don't be surprised if my two rules gain sharper focus as you get older and both you and the world do dumber and dumber things. A destructive stupidity is out there; I hope you know what it is and how to guard against it by now. On the other hand, there is also a stupidity that is miraculously constructive. Remember the words of St. John Paul II, "Stupidity is also a gift of God, but one mustn't misuse it."

Some of the greatest things in history have been created by people being people – which is to say, by being stupid. These things include, medicine, music, ice cream cones, comedy, agriculture, art, fudge, explosives, exploration, countries and families, including yours. Today is your turn to be stupid, and here's hoping you're the kind whose bumbling makes the world at least a little better. I'll help, but there's a good chance I'll mess up along the way. After all, I am a person.

Here are a few extra applications of my two rules:
– There are people who only believe the first rule and forget the second rule. Be careful; they often do well in politics.

– A lot of things make a lot of sense to a lot of people, and they often have their reasons for making sense. Before you write someone off as stupid, make sure you know their reasons as best you can. By the same token, make sure you know your own reasons so you won't immediately fold when someone else calls you stupid.

– My rules also apply to considering people of the past; they had their reasons, too. If the stuff they did looks dumb, imagine how much dumber you're going to look to historians after another thousand years or so.

– Many things that seem stupid now turn out to be smart later. The reverse is also true.

There you have it, kid. If this was helpful, great; if not, oh well. I must add one more addendum before I'm done here, though: There is one person who will never be part of the people-are-stupid rule.

That would be your mother.

Hey, kid.
First of all, don't take the whole "kid" thing personally. You come from a long and proud line of fathers who have often referred to any of their children as "kid," especially if there was a chore that needed doing and the father could not be bothered to remember their kid's specific name, never mind get the chore done on his own. This will become especially obvious if – God willing and my wallet notwithstanding – more of you kids show up. On the plus side, if you end up with kids of your own, you're allowed to employ the same efficiency when summoning them, so hang in there.

Now, as your dad, I'm required to share with you some unasked-for pieces of practical wisdom. However, I've hardly occupied this planet for a quarter of a century, and I don't know what exactly the world is going to look like by the time you grow up and realize how it all doesn't get any less bizarre. COVID-19 could still be a threat, or maybe a whole new threat like exploding sea urchins could have replaced it altogether. We could have replaced our world's governments with discount artificial intelligences. There could be giant statues of me across the country. Fried Oreos could be illegal. You could be reading this while relaxing in the New Sauk Centre colony on Mars. Maybe, just maybe, the AP Stylebook could finally be allowing Oxford commas. Anything's possible, so that means my advice has to be equally broad.

Without delving too far into the realm of the spiritual, I do in fact have two vital rules by which I live my life. These rules, which must always be considered together, have hardly ever been contradicted and streamline my relationship with the world. They are as follows:

- 1) People are stupid.
- 2) I am a person.

That's right, we're all morons – me and you. Of course, as I'm writing this, you are an infant and are exempt from these rules. At your current stage of development, you have convinced society to let you

Help us cross the Obstacle Fitness Challenge Park

FUNDRAISING FINISH LINE

Friday, Aug. 14th

4:30-7:30 PM
Jump in your boat or pontoon with friends and socially distance on beautiful Sauk Lake 1/2 mile southwest of the N. Hwy 71 bridge.



while enjoying **LIVE music by Blonde & the Bohunk**

Born and raised near Forada, MN, Brian Chlian has always loved the outdoors and country music. He sang lead vocals with the local band, Foolish Boys, and is well-known for his natural country western voice. Sara Severson grew up near Brandon, MN on a hobby farm where music has always been alive in her family. Sara sang lead vocals in two local bands, Dixie North & Incognito. Brian & Sara have joined their voices together to form a beautiful harmonic sound. Country music is in their roots and in their hearts. Blonde & the Bohunk are backed up by some great, local talent to provide a full-band experience.

From old to new country, pop and rock, you'll surely be entertained by a blonde and a bohunk!

Donations of \$1,000 or more will be named on the park's permanent Donor Recognition Selfie Station.

Hosted lakeside by Brenda Jennissen and Mark Klaphake on behalf of the Sauk Centre Obstacle Fitness Challenge Park, donations are requested via Venmo (@Brenda-Jennissen), Paypal (brenjennissen@gmail.com), check (made payable to Sauk Centre Area Community Foundation with "Challenge Park" on the memo line), or cash. 100% of the funds donated will be given to SCACF to make your Obstacle Challenge Park a reality. For donations over \$250 that would like a tax receipt, please message or indicate so to Brenda.

Thank you for investing in your community's vibrancy!

Sauk Centre Herald

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Letters: Letters to the editor and other opinion articles are welcomed. Letters must be signed with first and last name and include address and phone number. Letters should be short and to the point. We reserve the right to edit lengthy letters.

Corrections/Clarifications: The Herald strives for accuracy. If you would like to report a factual error, please call 352-6577.

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